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S.D.CIA's Performance On The Inquiries

Book V of the SSC Final Report challenges the performance of the intelligence agencies during the Warren Commission inquiry, emphasizing things that ~~it~~ ^{the Committee felt} ~~feels~~ should have been done but which it asserts ^{ed} were not.

It is correct to say that CIA has not produced evidence or analysis that addresses every theory that has been advanced over the years. As a practical consideration, it is unlikely that every theoretical question that can be conceived can be answered conclusively; there simply may be no evidence at all, or if there is evidence somewhere, it may not be accessible. The issue is what the intelligence agencies did, with the SSC Final Report portraying what seems to be a pattern of neglect or avoidance, which we believe is inconsistent with reason and the record.

The SSC Final Report offers a number of separate subjects in support of its case. It refers to an allegation by a person identified as "D" (pages 28-30, 41-42 and 102-103) that he overheard and saw Oswald being handed money in Mexico City for the purpose of assassinating President Kennedy; this was proven false, both by polygraph and by determining that Oswald was in New Orleans instead of Mexico City at the time the incident was supposed to have occurred. Nevertheless, this subject is treated in a confused and inconclusive manner in the

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SSC Final Report. Great emphasis is placed on the AMLASH operation, and its not being reported to the Warren Commission, inaccurately attributing to it characteristics and therefore significance that it did not have; this is treated in some detail at Tab A of this report. Space is devoted to two aircraft flights from Mexico City to Havana, on 22 November and 27 November, respectively, failures by CIA and the FBI being charged. In fact, the first of the flights is inaccurately described, the correct story removing the basis for the inferences developed by the SSC version. In the second instance the subject in question was the subject of a detailed inquiry as is discussed at Tab _____ of this report. These examples create some problems, for the reliability of the SSC Final Report unavoidably becomes the subject of basic reservations in the face of such errors. How to respond to treatments that seem contrary to the facts and that are used as a basis for serious criticisms presents ^{an additional problem} ~~a problem~~. In essence, it is necessary to review the record to the extent possible, and report the findings, whatever they are.

Recognizing the possibility of error or oversight in 1964 on the part of CIA, even in terms of the more limited perceptions of the time, it was decided to consider what courses of action CIA might have taken to throw some light on the questions as ~~were~~ understood at the time, as well as considering those questions that have been developed in the years following. What would be the areas of inquiry?

Oswald was known to have been out of the country twice subsequent to his return to private life from the Marine Corps. The

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first of these overseas trips was when he went to the Soviet Union in 1959 from which he returned in June 1962. The second of these trips was when he went to Mexico City in late September 1963, from which he returned in early October 1963. In addition to these two areas of obvious inquiry, there is the problem of general intelligence collection that might in some way produce information on the subject. The SSC Final Report adds to these considerations operations being conducted by CIA as part of a general U.S. program against the Castro regime. These four general areas of inquiry are covered below.

Travel To And From The USSR 1959-1962

On 26 November 1963 a cable was sent to Paris, Rome, Madrid, ¹⁴⁻⁶[Copenhagen], ¹⁴⁻⁴[Oslo], ¹⁴⁻¹[Helsinki], Brussels, The Hague, London, and Ottawa giving biographic information on Lee Harvey Oswald. It noted his discharge from the Marine Corps 11 September 1959 and his travel to the Soviet Union in October 1959, including sketchy details as to his employment and marriage while in Russia. Information was requested on:

"any scrap information which bears on
President's assassination . . ."

On 27 November the various addressee stations replied, with ¹⁴⁻¹[Helsinki] and London providing additional details on the travel of Oswald to the USSR. London reported that a British journalist claimed that during his own imprisonment in Cuba in 1959 there was a U.S. gangster there by the name of Santos, who was living in

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luxury in jail because he could not return to the U.S.; the source stated that Santos was "visited frequently by another American gangster named 'Ruby'."

Also on 27 November Ottawa reported the "delight" of the Cuban Embassy staff over the assassination of President Kennedy although the staff was instructed to "cease looking happy in public," in conformance with instructions from Cuba to "govern their actions by official attitude of Govt to which they ^{were} accredited." [Oslo] ¹⁴⁻⁴ on the same date, reported that the Soviets were shocked, blaming the assassination on extreme right-wing elements. Otherwise, the initial responses produced no other information.

On 29 November The Hague and Frankfurt were queried about Oswald's travel back from the USSR. This query was followed on 2 December by a similar cable to Berlin, Frankfurt, Bonn and The Hague. Various reporting produced details about the travel of Oswald and his wife from the USSR through Germany and the Netherlands en route to United States in June 1962.

The other stations involved in these inquiries had no traces or information on Oswald; liaison services were also queried without detailed results although there were some technical operations that produced peripheral information about the reactions of various groups under intelligence surveillance. Considerable exchanges were held with the Warren Commission on Oswald's Soviet record and its possible significance. Book V of the SSC Final Report, in not criticizing the Agency's performance in this aspect of the investigation seems to have accepted it as adequate.

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Oswald Mexico Visit -- September-October 1963

The visit by Oswald to Mexico City, in his attempt to get a visa for travel to the Soviet Union, transiting Cuba, has received extensive attention. The details concerning the knowledge about Oswald is treated in another annex to this paper (Tab____). The concern felt by all initially for the possible significance of Oswald's visit, and his contacts with the Cuban and Soviet embassies, was obvious at the time. The following statement is in a cable to Mexico City on 28 November 1963:

"We have by no means excluded the possibility that other as yet unknown persons may have been involved or even that other powers may have played a role. Please continue all your coverage of Soviet and Cuban installations and your liaison with Mexicans."

The allegations made by "D" about having seen Oswald taking money from Cubans received intensive attention from CIA and the FBI, working closely on the matter, and with the Mexican authorities. ~~This was demonstrated conclusively to have been a false allegation.~~ After the allegations by "D" had been proven false, Headquarters made the following statement to the Mexico City Station on 1 December 1963:

"Pls continue to follow all leads and tips. The question of whether Oswald acted solely on his own has still not been finally resolved."

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Again, on 13 December 1963 the Mexico City Station was cabled as follows:

"Pls continue watch for Soviet or Cuban reaction to investigation of assassination, evidence of their complicity, signs they putting out propaganda about case. FYI only, Soviet Intel in India had letters sent to ODYOKE readers demanding full investigation of case."

On 17 December 1963 Headquarters forwarded a dispatch to the Mexico City Station stating as follows:

". . . Mexico City has been the only major overseas reporter in the case. While this partly dictated by the facts of Lee OSWALD's life, we have not overlooked the really outstanding performance of Mexico City's major assets and the speed, precision, and perception with which the data was forwarded. Here it was relayed within minutes to the White House, ODACID, and ODENVY.

"Your LIENVOY data, the statements of Silvia DURAN, and your analyses were major factors in the quick clarification of the case, blanking out the really ominous spectre of foreign backing."

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Essentially, the trip of Oswald to Mexico City was investigated as thoroughly as possible without producing any evidence ~~there~~ of Soviet or Cuban complicity in the assassination of President Kennedy. If anything, events during Oswald's visit there are more subject to being seen as counter to such a possibility, given his troubles with both Cubans and Soviets. We do not offer this possible analysis as a proper view, but simply note that if it means anything it tends to counter speculation to the contrary.

General Collection Requirements

On 22 November 1963 all CIA stations abroad received a cable
(DIR 84608)
from Headquarters with the following statement:

"Tragic death of President Kennedy requires all of us to look sharp for any unusual intelligence developments. Although we have no reason to expect anything of a particular military nature, all hands should be on the quick alert at least for the next few days while the new President takes over the reins."

It is appropriate at this point to observe the general reaction to be expected from such a communication. In this case, without any leaks, the requirements had to be general. General reporting can be stimulated by general requests if there is something to report. Beyond this, in any event, in the world of intelligence, reporting assets and liaison services overseas are quick to realize the

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This will be rewritten to taken into account the recently discovered fact that WAVE did issue collection requirements to those agents inside Cuba, however limited the resources or access. Further, however "passive" the posture in the U.S., out of deference to the FBI, the fact of actual requirement to Cuban agents should be covered. Will Sturbitts is going to help develop this point.

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significance of important information and will report in on their own initiative. It must be considered significant, in the light of these considerations, that there has been massive silence on the subject over the years. Were there relevant or significant information on the subject it would have been reported either in response to the expression of general interest, or spontaneously, if such information was known to Agency sources.

If one believes that there was a conspiracy, with Oswald involved, one must accept the likelihood that his fellow conspirators would not have shared the knowledge beyond the narrow circle of those directly involved. Conversely, if there were no conspiracy, there obviously would be nothing to report in the first place. In either event, insistence that CIA produce something that proves or disproves the conspiracy theory flies in the face of a view that absence of reporting means that no collection requirements were issued.

The general collection requirements were addressed to stations with Cuban assets. The Miami Station did query its assets, but as was stated by the Chief of the Miami Station, in his testimony before the Committee, we had no real sources inside Cuba that could be expected to help on this (page 58), much less "an extensive intelligence network in Cuba" (as stated at page 10 of the SSC Final Report) that could be expected to have special access to such information. His characterization of acting in a "passive way" was seized on in the SSC Final Report, without its qualifying comments. In fact Cuban sources were made aware of interests in information.

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While the SSC Final Report undertakes to paint this in different terms, it is very difficult to conceive, even today, what could have been done in this respect that was not done.

CIA Operations Against Cuba

The SSC Final Report speaks of various operations against Cuba and the Castro regime that should have been reported to the Warren Commission as part of the subject matter that it consciously took into consideration.

To demonstrate its case the SSC Final Report discusses Operation AMLASH extensively. Because of the extensive treatment given that activity in the SSC Final Report, we have addressed it in detail in one of the other annexes of this report (Tab A). We feel that the SSC Final Report did not analyze that activity carefully and as a result misunderstood it, and that much of its presentation is therefore badly flawed. That will not be treated in detail again here.

The discussion at Tab A does refer to other known operational activities against Cuba, and the remarkable tensions between the Cuban and U.S. governments. The following discussion addresses what has been done recently in CIA to review all other Cuban operations to see what they may reveal relating to the Kennedy assassination.

In 1964 the people responsible for the various operations were still assigned to the general field of Cuban operations. They knew what was in them, and what was not. Today, persons unfamiliar with the files have gone through them in detail to determine if there was anything in them relevant to the Kennedy assassination.

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This search of old operational files necessarily meant that not only the obvious would be picked out, but that hypothetical tests must be applied to information and that tenuous possibilities would be treated as real for the purpose of the review. Findings might well be of a nature that would not be acceptable under normal professional standards. Nevertheless, to ensure thoroughness, even the most far-out possibility was to be scrutinized, with the thinnest leads being offered up for consideration. The fact that they are recorded does not mean that they are accepted as real, but simply that they were noted in the course of the special research that was undertaken. Ordinarily these items might not be dignified by even taking them past the first phase of hypothetical consideration. There always are reservations about advancing unfounded theory beyond this first step; nowadays this is an additional consideration simply because once they find their way into print they may find their way into the public domain without the profound reservations that may be held about them. The talent of the press for extravagant extrapolation and selective reporting almost certainly seems to risk a reckless and irresponsible presentation^{of findings} to the public, once separated from the special circumstances that produced them. Nevertheless, they are duly recorded here.

The relevance of the ^{Two}~~three~~ following tenuous summaries is based on an hypothesis that has attracted some current acceptance, but but that is seriously flawed in itself. This is the hypothesis that actions of the U.S. Government were so provocative to Castro that he

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retaliated by ordering the assassination of President Kennedy. There has never been a secret about the tensions between the Kennedy Administration and the Castro regime. The SSC Final Report notes this (pages 2, 3, 10 and 11). In fact, the totality of American policy and practice must have appeared threatening to the Castro regime, and most certainly was considered by it as provocative. On the basis of this hypothesis, *The SSC in its Final Report stated that activities* The SSC Final Report feels they should have been reported to the Warren Commission. The approach in the SSC Final Report was to select separate elements of the overall program directed against the Castro regime which might, of themselves, have been especially provocative to the Cubans had they learned of them. This selection of separate activities, seeing in them especially provocative characteristics, hypothesizing a possibility that they might have become known to the Castro regime, and then pointing to an ultimate conclusion of responsibility, presents a series of discrete progressions that must be viewed at each step: the selection must be well founded (the SSC dismissed out of hand the relevance of the operation against Castro that involved the criminal underworld, while the AMLASH operation fails to support the thesis); the provocative characteristics must be well founded (the treatment of the AMLASH operation does this unsuccessfully); the possibility that the Castro regime learned of the activity in its essential characteristics (this is not done, either ~~by~~ conclusively demonstrating its security weakness or even that the SSC really appreciated the nature of the operation); and then there would have to be some serious consideration

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of how Castro would have reacted, given all the questions that would have been presented to him in taking the action suggested by the SSC Final Report.

It obviously was on the basis of the well known generally low state of relations between the U.S. and Cuba that the possibility of Cuban involvement with Oswald was considered at the beginning of the investigation. The Warren Commission obviously did not elect to inquire about the separate pieces of the entire Kennedy anti-Castro program, but relied primarily--as still seems appropriate today--on extensive and detailed reconstruction of Oswald's history to ascertain where he had been, what he had done, the identity of his associates, etc. This was supported by more general information requirements levied among Cuban sources who might know or learn something, as well as sources in other parts of the world, especially in Europe.

Today in 1977 it is difficult to reconstruct exactly everything that did and did not happen in 1964, although when specific issues are raised they can be checked. For instance, there were many individuals assigned to various aspects of Cuban operations. They were familiar with those activities, and with their strengths and weaknesses. Had they known of any aspects of their operations that might have born on the assassination of President Kennedy, it is certain that ^{they}~~it~~ would have been reported, as in fact were a number of separate items of information. That sources did not report more meaningful information is an indication of what was known then to those actually involved and what could be learned.

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Today, the knowledge of the persons directly involved in the various operations in the period preceding President Kennedy's death cannot be recaptured in the form it existed then. Those persons are scattered, their memories are not as detailed or accurate as they then were, and some are dead. The SSC--in its attempt to capture elements of the past--led some employees into expressing opinions on subject matter they did not know about in 1964, phrased to be responsive to representations of SSC staff members that were inaccurate; this illustrates at best the difficulties in resolving the question today on a responsible basis.

In the face of the hypothesis advanced by the SSC Final Report, with its interpretations based on imprecise presentations of events [and a generally captious character of its arguments,] it has been felt necessary to review in great detail all records of Cuban operations conducted by CIA during the period in question, 1960-64. The organization of the review is described at Tab _____. It was not easy to predict the form that information turned up by this inquiry might take, and special care had to be exercised in the effort. In doing this the provocation concept was kept in mind. In the months that it took to complete this extensive review, it is significant to observe that only two areas of specific operational activity were found that might meet some of the requirements of the provocation theory, or that in any way might relate to the assassination of President Kennedy. To report this conclusion to the research is not to set aside the original general question facing the Warren Commission, that led to the initial concern

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over whether there might be Cuban or Soviet connections behind Oswald, arising from the state of relations between Cuba and the U.S. That such possibilities remain unresolved in some minds is apparent, but that the records for that period disclose no such leads today, and that the appropriate sources were queried at the time of the investigation, is the conclusion of the present inquiry.

The two areas of operational activity noted above can be described briefly as follows:

2. Operations directed against the Cuban leadership.
1. Operations involving the criminal underworld.

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JLL

I have experimented with the three questions raised: Sturgis, AMTRUNK and the objective of splitting the regime, to see what we might end up saying. However, what we put in here depends on how your paper progresses.

Please destroy previous drafts.

SDB